



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Making CME Work

The new CME requirement for Singapore doctors is to acquire at least 50 CME points for the two-year period ending 31st December 2004 before their practicing certificate can be renewed. This will be enshrined by a forthcoming amendment to the Medical Registration Act.

Doctors who are not participating in continuing medical education (CME) would have to start accumulating the 50 CME points if they want to continue practising medicine in Singapore. For others who are already doing CME by choice, the new imposition merely reinforces their professional commitment to stay competent and up-dated. For them, the new focus would therefore be on doing CME activities that are effective – not just to satisfy the statutory requirement but to ensure that the time and resources they invest in CME is well spent and the knowledge and skills gained are relevant.

Positive mindset

We can look at the 50 CME point requirement positively instead of negatively. The scheme is now to accumulate 50 points in two years instead of 25 CME points per year. This gives the practicing doctor flexibility in when to get the points.

Also, there are now many varied avenues to obtain the CME points apart from the traditional show-and-tell lectures. There are now points for journal reading, distance learning courses, seminars and workshops and attachments. Conferences should also form part of the variety. As has been pointed out by Francis Bacon in his Essay on Study, "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man..."

The College's initiatives

The College has started rolling out CME activities for the family doctor. It has in place two new schemes. The first relates to the SMC accreditation scheme for core family medicine (FM) CME points. The second relates to the Family Practice skills courses with distance learning as an integral component of a learning sandwich.

Core CME points

Achieving mandatory core points is now not a problem. The requirement of at least 10 core points during the two-year period (ie 20% of the 50 points) is readily achievable by self-study of 10 articles from specified journals and documenting the process in the SMC computer. To assist readers in the choice of papers to read, the Singapore Family Physician (SFP) journal also included a special article containing a list of 10 articles recommended by an Editorial Board member. The focus is on family medicine topics and if local papers are available, these will be selected. In the current issue of the SFP, there are articles on diagnosis, therapy and practice related to asthma. These papers are also chosen with the view of exposing readers to some current research findings in the subject area.

Family Practice Skills Courses

The Family Practice Skills Courses are CME programmes organized by the College to meet the knowledge, cognitive and psychomotor skills needs of the practicing doctor. These courses are developed as a conjoint effort of family physicians and subject matter experts.

The courses can be looked upon as a learning sandwich. Take the Basic Home Care Course launched in October 2002 as an example. Core knowledge is acquired by self-study. On verification of the learning by submitting completed MCQs to the College, CME points can be earned. This learning sandwich is completed if doctors also elect to attend seminars to hone psychomotor skills and hands-on workshops and clinical attachment to acquire psychomotor skills as well. The College will issue attendance certificates to document the completion of the learning cycle.

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